

98 Moore Ln, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420  
Lorinda Howland

9/10/15 Public Hearing of the San Luis Obispo County Planning  
Commission  
Agenda Item #4: PLC 57/2015

I am a property owner that lives more than 3 miles driving distance away from the nearest oil well at Freeport McMoran's PXP Price Canyon facility (1821 Price Canyon Road).

In the 8 years that I have lived in this neighborhood, when the winds blow from the Northwest, I can smell sulfur outside my house that is emanating from the oilfields. When that smell is present, it is strong enough to close open windows in my house.

Although the most direct driving route from my house to the city of San Luis Obispo takes me via West Ormonde to Price Canyon Road and past the oilfields, I never travel that route because the sulfur smell emanating from the oilfields is so offensive. Even if I close all my car windows and keep the recirculation button active in my vehicle, the smell is so strong that it cannot be escaped. In all of my travels into and out of my neighborhood, I have never once driven that route without being bothered by the fumes emanating from the oilfields.

I oppose the three year extension to Freeport McMoran's Conditional Use Permit to drill the previously approved Phase IV oil wells (D010386D). The installation of any more wells at the oilfield can only increase the ill effects on my neighborhood. Freeport McMoran has not proven to be a good neighbor. It hasn't done enough to control the odor emanating from the existing active wells. It should not be allowed to drill any more wells until and unless it can adopt odor control for its existing wells.

The San Luis Obispo Planning Commission must deny the extension to best serve the needs of the surrounding properties near Price Canyon. Freeport McMoran cannot control wind speed or the direction of the wind blowing through its oilfields. But it can control the odor emanating from their active wells. And until it does more to control that odor, it should not be allowed to drill more wells.



PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA ITEM: 4  
DATE: 9-10-15

DO NOT REMOVE FROM FILE

Pamela Michaelis  
Charles Fellbaum  
494 Vista Del Robles  
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420  
September 9, 2015

San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors  
1055 Monterey Street  
Room D170  
San Luis Obispo, CA

To Whom It May Concern:

As residents of the Old Oak Park neighborhood we are concerned with the expansion of the current oil field. We were not informed of the current oil pipeline project that is in the process of tearing up Ormonde & Old Oak Park Roads. Old Oak Park and Ormonde Roads are narrow and inadequate for the transport of heavy equipment.

Expansion of the oil field will reportedly require additional water to be used in the production of oil. This area like most of California is currently affected by a 4 year long drought. It may take decades for the aquifer and environment to recover. Any further drain of water from our or other neighboring aquifers is of upmost concern. No one can provide that the aquifers are not interrelated. There is no doubt that the water table has declined in the 20 years we have resided in our home.

Please consider carefully the use of additional potable well water for this project as it will adversely affect our neighborhood and home values. I am not against oil production but am concerned with the use of additional water.

Sincerely,

The block contains two handwritten signatures in dark ink. The first signature is cursive and appears to read 'Pamela Michaelis'. The second signature is also cursive and appears to read 'Charles Fellbaum'.

Pamela Michaelis  
Charles Fellbaum





For Immediate Release, March 10, 2015

Contact: Patrick Sullivan, (415) 517-9364, [psullivan@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:psullivan@biologicaldiversity.org)

## Oil Industry Injection Wells Routinely Fracture California Rock Formations

### **State's Troubled Oil Agency Admits Allowing Illegal High-pressure Steam Injections That Create Water Pollution Risk, Deadly Sink Hole Danger**

SACRAMENTO— California's troubled oil agency routinely approves high-pressure steam injections into oil wells that fracture rock formations, violating the law and increasing the risk of water pollution and deadly sinkhole accidents like a 2011 incident that killed a Kern County oil worker.

This illegal practice was revealed in a new document released by the California Senate ahead of this morning's oversight hearing on state regulators' failure to protect scores of aquifers from Monterey to Kern and Los Angeles counties from oil industry injections of toxic waste fluid (see [interactive map](#)).

The document says the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources, or DOGGR allows cyclic steam injection that "routinely exceeds the fracture gradient of the formation" in violation of state regulations and the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. Cyclic steam injection is widespread in California oilfields.

"Gov. Brown's oil regulators are rubberstamping high-pressure steam injections that can pollute our water and cause horrific accidents," said Kassie Siegel of the Center for Biological Diversity. "This shows once again that state officials have ignored the law and haven't protected California's precious aquifers from toxic oil waste."

Today's Senate hearing — titled "Ensuring Groundwater Protection: Is the Underground Injection Control Program Working?" — also examines the oil division's issuance of hundreds of illegal permits to inject toxic oil waste fluid directly into protected groundwater aquifers, including aquifers with water clean enough to drink.

Oil regulators admit they wrongfully issued as many as 490 permits for oil industry waste disposal wells that violated federal and state law. But they've only shut down 23 of the hundreds of wells that are currently and illegally injecting hazardous waste fluid directly into protected aquifers. Nearly 2,000 enhanced oil recovery wells are also operating illegally in protected aquifers.

State oil officials have also tried to downplay the risks of cancer-causing benzene in oil industry wastewater. But dangerous levels of benzene are fairly typical in produced water in California, according to a 1993 study by the oil division.

Other tests done by oil companies show high benzene levels in flowback fluid coming out of fracked wells in California. Those tests, mandated by a new fracking disclosure law and available online, found benzene at levels as high as 1,500 times the federal limits for drinking water.

These public documents also reveal that oil companies dumped this contaminated fracking flowback fluid down injection disposal wells like those operating in protected aquifers.

"Fracking and other oil production techniques are producing huge volumes of toxic fluid that threatens California's future," Siegel said. "State regulators are letting oil companies do virtually whatever they want with this dangerous waste. If Gov. Brown doesn't step in to halt fracking and illegal wastewater injection, Californians will bitterly regret the damage done to our water supply."

*The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 825,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.*

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## Comparisons of Existing Exemption Area (1974)

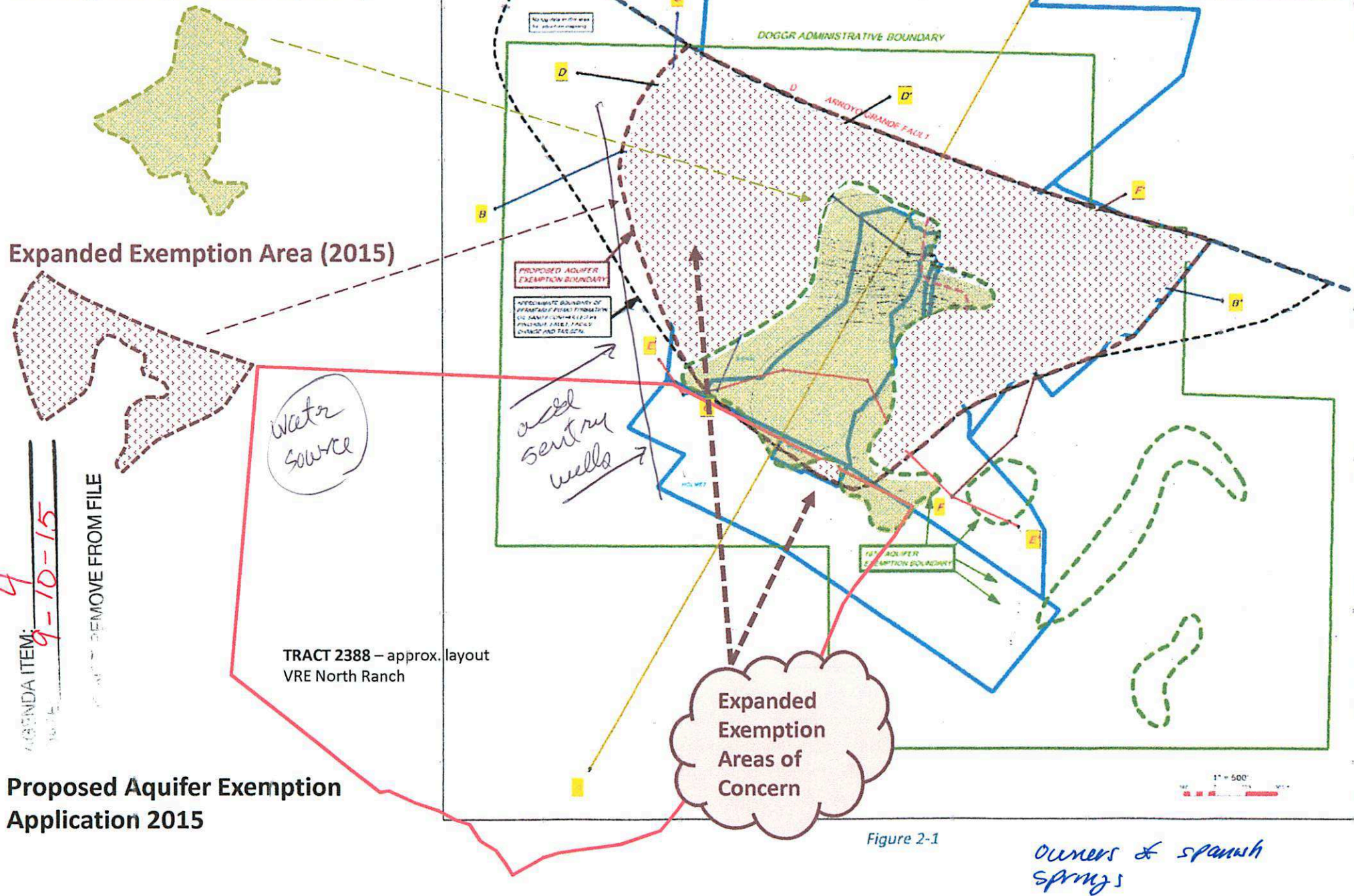


Figure 2-1

owners of spanish  
springs



# Agencies admit failing to protect water sources from fuel pollution

By JULIE CART

MARCH 10, 2015, 7:23 PM | SACRAMENTO

LEARNING COMMISSION

AGENDA ITEM: 4  
DATE 9-10-15

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**T**he agencies charged with overseeing oil production and protecting California's ever-dwindling water sources from the industry's pollution all fell down on the job, one state official told a panel of peeved lawmakers Tuesday.

During a testy two-hour oversight hearing, officials from the California Department of Conservation, the department's Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources and the state Water Resources Control Board promised senators a top-down overhaul of their regulation of the disposal of oil field wastewater.

But after a handful of recent embarrassing revelations about the division's history of lackluster regulation, lawmakers questioned how they could trust agency officials to follow through, characterizing longstanding agency practices as corrupt and inept.

- Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) called the division's failings "endemic" and said that just reading background materials to prepare for Tuesday's hearing caused her blood pressure to soar.

"There has been a serious imbalance between the role regulating the oil and gas industry and the role of protecting the public," Jackson said.

Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources officials admitted last summer that for years they inadvertently allowed oil companies to inject wastewater — from fracking and other oil production operations — into hundreds of disposal wells in protected aquifers, a violation of federal law. Disclosures by oil drillers show high levels of benzene, a carcinogen, in the water that comes out of the ground with oil. Benzene is naturally occurring but extremely dangerous.

So far, the state has shut down 23 of the hundreds of injection wells that are in aquifers not approved for waste injection.

Agency officials have attributed the errors to haphazard record-keeping and antiquated data collection. And they have said that initial tests on nine drinking water supply wells found no benzene or other contaminants.



- The federal Environmental Protection Agency has called the state's errors "shocking" and said California's oil field wastewater injection program does not comply with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The state has been taking broadsides from the U.S. EPA, the state EPA and local water boards, all focusing on the troubled Underground Injection Control program, which is supposed to monitor the disposal of production water into below-ground wells.

The topic of Tuesday's oversight hearing: "Is the underground injection control program working?"

A barrage of pointed questions indicated that the senators, at least, believed it was not.

Lawmakers several times said that Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources officials had requested more funding to solve intractable problems and had received beefed-up budgets beginning in 2010.

But the millions in new funding came with the requirement that the division annually report to the Legislature the results of its reform efforts. The agency has filed only one such report since 2010.

"The reports simply don't come back," said Sen. Lois Wolk (D-Davis). "This is a management issue. That's the problem, not resources."

Conservation department chief Mark Nechodom told Wolk he was unaware until recently that the Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources was required to file reports to the Legislature and vowed to get back on track.

In another exchange, state oil and gas supervisor Steven Bohlen was asked whether cyclic steam injection practices — in which steam is injected underground with such pressure that rock formations are crumbling and potentially creating dangerous sinkholes — are violating federal and state regulations.

Bohlen said that he thought so but that he hadn't had time to "brush up on regulations."

He also said the oil industry's technology had outpaced the state's regulations, many of which have remain unchanged for decades.

Bohlen was also asked why the state agency said it will continue to allow, in some circumstances, additional injection wells in aquifers the EPA considers to be off limits.



Bohlen responded by saying that Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources officials believed those aquifers would probably become approved for injections in the future.

"But isn't it violating federal law now?" asked Sen. Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica).

Bohlen did not respond.

Lawmakers also asked officials at the state Water Resources Control Board why they allowed injection wells to operate in high quality water sources.

Jonathan Bishop, chief deputy director of the board, said his agency took the word of the division that the wells were legally permitted.

"We relied on their expertise," Bishop said. "In hindsight, maybe we should have done independent analysis. We didn't."

As each agency took its blows from the oversight committee, Nechodom said, "We all fell down."

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